

**Staying Healthy in  
Sick Organizations:**

**THE CLOVER  
PRACTICE™**

**Kathleen Paris**

In Memory of My Father, Vincent L. Paris

*Staying Healthy in Sick Organizations: The Clover Practice™*

This publication is based on the author's personal experiences with a variety of organizations. The author is not engaged, however, in rendering legal, psychological, medical, or financial advice to individuals.

If legal, psychological, medical, or financial advice or assistance is required, the services of a competent professional who can focus on the reader's individual situation should be sought.

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## **INTRODUCTION: THE CLOVER PRACTICE™**

It's a funny thing—When people hear the title of this book, they get a knowing look in their eyes. They know what I mean when I talk about sick organizations.

Most modern workplaces are at least a little bit sick in my view. They are sick because they are designed and managed according to obsolete principles. They are sick because too many people without appropriate skills and motives supervise other people. And willingness to maintain illusions keeps them sick. Sick organizations are like sick people. They spend an awful lot of time trying to treat their symptoms.

What about your work situation? Think about how you feel at the end of your work day or your shift. Now imagine yourself leaving work feeling peaceful. That is the peace of mind The Clover Practice™ can give you. The Clover Practice™ is for anyone who

- Works for a paycheck
- Is willing to take responsibility for his or her own actions

- Wants to go home after work feeling peaceful

If this describes you, welcome! Get comfortable and read on. It doesn't matter if you don't supervise anyone or if you supervise hundreds of people. It doesn't matter if you work in corporate America or city government or for the biggest university or the smallest school. It doesn't matter if you own your own business or work as a contractor. The Clover Practice™ can help you maintain your integrity, honor, and emotional health even while working in organizations with major design flaws.

I like to make things simple. In my consulting practice, whenever I help a client solve a problem, I use three principles that have become The Clover Practice™. I urge my clients to use the practice as they wrestle with problems and I use it to guide my own behavior. I hope it will be your guide also and "...something to hold in our minds in moments of confusion and doubt."<sup>1</sup>

This is the The Clover Practice™:

1. Tell the Truth, Always
2. Speak For Yourself
3. Declare Your Interdependence

A practice is something you do all the time, no matter what the circumstances. The Clover Practice™ will become second nature to you. You will have ways to deal with circumstances that stump you now. The principles themselves are not necessarily

new, but living them as a whole package probably is. The principles are explained in detail in Chapters 1–3.

I use the common three-leaf clover as the symbol for this practice. Green is the color of life. A clover is a living thing—and the whole point of working is to sustain our lives. The three-leaf clover is symbolic too because each leaf is important. With one leaf missing, it's not a three-leaf clover anymore. Similarly, the three principles in The Clover Practice™ are meant to be used together. They reinforce each other to help you stay healthy emotionally.

The Clover Practice™ is simple, but definitely not easy to live. No one can live this practice perfectly, but everyone can strive to. I believe that if you are willing to learn what the three leaves of the clover mean and use them as a guide—you will be able to stay emotionally healthy in most work situations. This means doing the job you are getting paid to do without it tearing at your spirit or leaving you feeling diminished as a person. The Clover Practice™ can also help you connect with people you work with in a positive and mutually supportive way. We don't have to wait for other people or "the system" to change to have healthier work lives ourselves.

To me, staying healthy at work means you can go home at the end of the day or at the end of your shift feeling peaceful. It means you can stop thinking about work and enjoy your life. (There are the dramatic situations that make it hard to forget about what happened at work, but these shouldn't happen every day or even every week.) Some occupations are, by their na-

ture, dramatic, such as medicine, law enforcement, firefighting, etc. For those in high-stress occupations, The Clover Practice™ can help reduce the drama we create ourselves.

Many workplaces are saturated with fear. I don't want you to be scared anymore. Every day so many of us go to jobs where we feel afraid—afraid of our bosses, afraid about how we are doing, afraid to speak up, afraid to tell the truth. Some of our fear is well founded and some of our fear is our own creation. By picking up this book, you have taken the first step to conquering the fear inside your own head and taking control of your own life.

What is emotional and mental health? Even the surgeon general of the United States says in a recent report that mental health is not easy to define because every definition reflects particular values.<sup>2</sup> A dictionary definition of mental health is, “A state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual is able to use his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life.”<sup>3</sup> By my definition, mentally and emotionally healthy people:

- Know their boundaries—what is theirs to do, worry about, and control. (This implies that they know what is not their business as well.)
- Are helpful—they have enough satisfaction in their lives that they can reach out to other people. There's enough water left in the well to share.
- Are hopeful—they have a positive outlook and generally assume that good things will happen. When bad things

happen, they try to see past them into a more positive future.

- Are peaceful—they seek to live calmly in the moment without worrying excessively about the past or the future.

It is my hope that The Clover Practice™ can help all of us move toward this view of mental and emotional health. Although The Clover Practice™ is focused on keeping your mind and emotions healthy, your physical health will improve if your stress is lower. Our mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health are very closely tied together, more connected than many people (even some doctors) realize.

I have consulted in public and private, profit and nonprofit organizations. There are more similarities than difference in the experiences of people who work in these varied settings. Public and nonprofit organizations are modeled right after their money-making cousins and catch the same illnesses. The questions for you to answer ultimately will be

- How sick is the place where I work?
- How can I stay healthy?
- Do I need to get out?

You may recognize, with the help of The Clover Practice™, when you are in an environment that is so toxic that you must get out. If you think you are in this situation, go right to Chapter 6.

The three-leaf clover is awfully close to a four-leaf clover, which is synonymous with good luck. Staying emotionally healthy while you work is not a matter of luck, but of intentional choices on your part—decisions about how you act as well as decisions about where you work. Most people have more employment choices than they think they have. You can read more about this in Chapter 6. And speaking of choices, many of us have never made conscious choices about what values, beliefs, and lifestyles we want for our own adult lives. Many of us have not stopped to ask ourselves how what we experienced as we grew up may be affecting our work lives right now. You can do your adult homework in Chapter 4.

The Clover Practice™ illuminates the high road. This practice is not for everyone, only those people who want to be emotionally healthy and peaceful while making a living. Those who have their sights set on control, prestige, and wealth at any cost probably won't get much out of The Clover Practice™.

My hope is that The Clover Practice™ will become your touchstone, helping you stay healthy in your own inner space—your mind, heart, and spirit—while working for organizations that are fundamentally unhealthy. In Chapter 5, I say more about why I believe organizations are more likely to be sick than healthy.

I divide my own career into two halves—pre- and post-1990. I had my career success post-1990 after I figured out that The Clover Practice™ was the way to go. It is my beacon every single day. I offer it to you and guarantee that if you take the time to read about the principles and think about them, the place you

work will never look the same and you will have new ways to deal with work in a healthy way.

Some people might think The Clover Practice™ is too simplistic or naïve. As Buddhist monk and teacher Robert Aitken puts it, “Do you think this is naïve? Maybe so, but look where sophistication has brought us.”<sup>4</sup>

A bonus of The Clover Practice™ is that it will serve you just as well in your home and family life as it will at work. Imagine a family where everyone tells the truth, where people speak for themselves, leaving the door open for other views and feelings, and where family members rely on and support each other in a framework of interdependent relationships. The more you live The Clover Practice™ at work, the greater will be your ability to use it at home and vice versa.

By the way, this book is written for Americans working in America. I don't know how well The Clover Practice™ plays in other countries. The book will make more sense if you read it in chapter order, but if you're like me, you will start from the back anyway.





## **CHAPTER 1: TELL THE TRUTH, ALWAYS**

*Bella DePaulo, a University of Virginia psychologist who studies lying, says that in her twenty years of research, only one person has ever said he didn't tell lies, but "he was lying," she adds.<sup>5</sup>*

In my early career, I was willing to be honest with bosses, colleagues, direct reports, and customers only up to a point. My biggest concern was how something looked. If it looked like I was being totally honest, that was good enough for me. I cringe when I think of some of the things I did and said when I was thirty-something.

I will never forget the day when I heard another person—a consultant speaking at a conference—telling about a situation where she had lied to a client. This was in the days before e-mails and fax machines. She had said a project was finished and ready to put in the mail when it really wasn't. (And the client, unfortunately, offered to come right over to pick it up!) I stood stunned in the back of that crowded room—here was another grown-up ADMITTING that she had lied at work. I thought only I said things were almost done when they were just getting

started, or subtly suggested that someone else had caused a delay when I was the one who was behind. This brave speaker said that it was only by being totally honest that we could be healthy and successful in our work. I recognized instantly that what she said was true. That day changed my life.

That is how the first leaf of The Clover Practice™, “Tell the Truth, Always,” showed itself. “Always” is significant, because we must tell the truth even when it’s not convenient and even when we don’t look too good. Truthfulness to others is the only way to stay true to yourself and vice versa. And people who have that kind of deep integrity earn the trust of others, which almost always leads to success.

### **Truth is Hard to Find in America**

Mainstream religions support honesty and we have a national parable—George Washington and the cherry tree—about telling the truth. In court, people swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The reality in our society, however, is that dishonesty is OK and even expected. It starts at a young age. How old does a kid have to be to learn that the toy is never as big or as much fun as it looks on the cereal box or on TV? As consumers, we know we are being lied to regularly and skillfully by advertisers enticing us to buy things. We are so accustomed to these advertising lies that we don’t even seem to mind anymore. How many of us believe that four out of five dentists recommend anything?

A few statistics help make the point:

- 57 percent of office professionals report that they have been asked (or have seen someone else being asked) to lie for their bosses<sup>6</sup>
- 93 percent of 40,000 workers admit to lying habitually and regularly in the workplace<sup>7</sup>
- College students admit that at least 70 percent of their excuses for missed assignments are lies<sup>8</sup>

Vice President Cheney’s chief of staff, Scooter Libby, was convicted of lying to a jury and obstruction of justice in March of 2007. Another top-ranking member of the George W. Bush administration thumbed his nose at traditional views of truth. In an interview with *New York Times* journalist Ron Suskind,<sup>9</sup> the Bush advisor said, “‘We’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you’re studying that reality — judiciously, as you will — we’ll act again, creating other new realities....”

News stories abound about companies that boldly lied with terrible consequences for people and the earth we live on. In 2001, Enron, then America’s seventh largest company, “dissolved into worthlessness in an ugly morass of accounting fraud and human greed.”<sup>10</sup> The collapse left investors empty handed and 21,000 employees out of work, their pension fund gone. Company executives were later found guilty of criminal behavior ranging from insider trading to deceptive accounting, manipulating energy markets and bribing foreign governments.<sup>11</sup>

We have coal and electrical groups paying PR companies to “reposition global warming as theory (not fact).”<sup>12</sup> We have mar-

keters pitching junk food directly to children.<sup>13</sup> We have pharmaceutical companies using PR to define new diseases in order to create a market to match their drugs.<sup>14</sup>

I recently ordered a book that took me by surprise. The title suggested that I could prevent other people from lying to me. I liked the idea of inviting honesty from others. Instead, I found a psychologist who recommended telling elaborate lies to trick other people into exposing their lies. Come on!

Philosopher David Nyberg claims that lying is instinctive in humans and “that life without deception is not possible.”<sup>15</sup> He has plenty of examples to point to of individual and corporate lying and deception.

### **Choosing a Different Path**

Morrie Schwartz says in *Tuesdays with Morrie*, “...If the culture doesn’t work, don’t buy it. Create your own.”<sup>16</sup> You can choose to live your life differently. Each of us has control of what we do and say. You can create a culture of truthfulness around yourself, around your desk or machine or classroom. The best part is that it’s contagious. Human brains are constructed so that we learn behaviors almost subconsciously from how others behave. You can be more powerful than you ever thought, just by sticking to the truth.

If you are willing to Tell the Truth, Always, you will be trusted by others. If you have a reputation for honesty and integrity, you are more likely to be entrusted with important and interesting

work. Eckhart Tolle, in *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life’s Purpose*, says, “Those few people who...function from the deeper core of their Being, those who do not attempt to appear more than they are but are simply themselves, stand out as remarkable and are the only ones who truly make a difference in this world.”<sup>17</sup>

*The desire to be perfect or look perfect is the wish to be God. And that is a sin.*

– Peter Block<sup>18</sup>

Consultant Tom Sant says when people are desperate, they have two choices: improve their situation or resort to lies and deception. For some people, lying and cheating look easier than fixing the problem. But, he adds, what goes around comes around and sooner or later others (inside and outside of the organization) catch on and eventually know whom not to trust.<sup>19</sup>

Nan De Mars, international consultant on office ethics, tells the story of a person who did something unethical at the bidding of her boss. She did what she had been told to do because she was afraid to say no. The irony was that after that incident, her boss never trusted her again. He knew that she was willing to be deceitful.<sup>20</sup>

People lie usually for one of two reasons: to make themselves look better or to protect someone else. In a 1996 study by Bella DePaulo and colleagues, 147 people ages 18-71 kept diaries of the lies they told over the course of a week. According to par-

ticipants' diaries, only one in four lies was told to protect another.<sup>21</sup>

Even though lying is as common as rainwater, when we lie, we pay a price, even if we are not found out. The people in the study of lying conducted by DePaulo and colleagues admitted to having feelings of discomfort and diminished closeness in the conversations in which they lied.<sup>22</sup>

Telling the Truth, Always, requires both

- Telling the truth to yourself
- Telling the truth to others

They are mutually reinforcing. Often people who find it easy to deceive others just as easily delude themselves.

Most importantly, if you Tell the Truth, Always, you will never need to be in hiding. You will never have to fear that something you said will be found out. You need never worry that you told two people two different things and that they might compare notes.

Research even suggests that you will get sicker less often if you are committed to being open. Honest communication boosts your immune system. One researcher found that people who spoke openly and honestly about stressful experiences or wrote about them (being honest with themselves) not only had lower blood pressure, they also showed souped-up immune systems.

Their bodies literally made more white blood cells than the bodies of people in the control group.<sup>23</sup>

*The truth is a very powerful force that cuts through the darkness of denial and illusion. It cuts to the core of an issue and illuminates it.*

– Hannegan<sup>24</sup>

Following the practice of Telling the Truth, Always, you can leave work with the lightness that comes from knowing that everything you said and did, even if not perfect, was honest and honorable.

### **The Truth as We Know It**

When a witness swears in court to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, he or she is presumably promising to tell “the truth.” We know that the testimony of two different witnesses can be contradictory even though both people believe they are telling the truth. AA and Al-Anon, organizations that have helped millions of people, are founded on the necessity of telling the truth *as we know it*. Those last words, “as we know it,” make all the difference. In their wisdom, AA and Al-Anon recognize that it’s the best anyone can do.

I may think I know “the truth,” but reality may be something else. Have you ever looked at one of those 3-D pictures where it looks like one thing, but if you look at it in a certain way, a different image emerges from the background? Just because you can’t see the picture buried in the pattern, doesn’t mean it’s not

there. You can say you don't see it, but you can't correctly say that it's not there.

Hannegan says that speaking the truth means speaking from an inner confidence “that does not require validation and buy in from others.”<sup>25</sup> I have learned in my consulting work that if I make it clear that I am speaking from my own point of view, based on what I have heard and seen, and that I am willing to entertain additional information, then I can tell the truth as I see it without getting kicked out.

Being clear that you are speaking from your view of the situation (versus speaking an eternal truth) also makes it easier for other people hear what you are saying.

If you have read anything by Peter Senge, then you know about mental models.<sup>26</sup> These are the views we carry about how the world works, what reality is all about, how things are. Mental models exist in our own minds, developing over time mostly through our life experiences. Everything we see, hear, feel, taste, experience, is interpreted by and filtered through our mental models. What makes mental models so powerful (and difficult to change) is the fact that they are unconscious. We don't know we have them.

One of ten principles of “enlightened business” suggested by Buddhist monk and former diamond company executive Geshe Michael Roach in *The Diamond Cutter* is to “convey true impressions.” He says that complete honesty means “the impression which your words leave matches the impressions you have in

your mind.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, the outside matches the inside. Lying, says Roach, is “giving someone else an impression which does not strictly correspond to the impression that you yourself have of the same thing.”<sup>28</sup>

Conveying true impressions is the best we can do when it comes to telling the truth. Karen Grede, a gifted family therapist in Madison, Wisconsin, who specializes in families with troubled teens, likes to get the whole family involved in therapy sessions—parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles—everyone in the family who is willing to show up. Grede says that in such therapy sessions, “there are as many truths as there are people in the room.”

Psychologist Margaret Wheatley describes the work of theorist Karl Weick who says that we participate in the creation of our organizational realities. Wheatley says, “There is no objective reality; the environment we experience does not exist ‘out there.’ It is co-created through our acts of observation, what we choose to notice and worry about.”<sup>29</sup>

In most workplace situations, there simply is more than one truth about any situation. This is a concept that workshop participants sometimes get upset about. Once a person got red in the face and sputtered, “Are you telling me there is no such thing as ‘the truth’?” To which I answered, “People can be involved in the same event and have very different experiences.” Each experience is true for that person. Awareness that we construe everything through our own personal lens and that everyone else is doing the same thing frees us up. It allows us to say,

“This is what it looks like to me. What does it look like to you?”  
We need humility and compassion when comparing realities with other people.

**Telling the Truth, Always, or Flapping Your Gums?**

Imagine a workplace where people said out loud everything that was passing through their minds. Work would surely cease. How does this comically tragic scene square with “Tell the Truth, Always”? Here’s where the line is drawn—I don’t have to share my opinions on every topic. They are only my opinions, not eternal truths. My dislike of my colleague’s ratty jeans on casual Friday is my opinion and I don’t have to share it. This changes, of course, if my colleague asks me if I think the jeans look bad. Then I am compelled to honestly say that I think they look pretty beat up for our office.

An example of the difference between Telling the Truth, Always, and yet not sharing all my opinions is this. I tell the truth if I say that I saw one employee punch another employee in the lunchroom today. But my views on whether either is a worthy husband is my opinion, based on my ideas of marriage and partnership. I don’t have to share my opinion on everything.

**Table 1.1. Rotary International Fifty-Year-Old Ethics Test**

<p>The Rotary Four-Way Test</p> <p>Of the things we think, say, or do:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is it the TRUTH?</li> <li>2. Is it FAIR to all concerned?</li> <li>3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?</li> <li>4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?</li> </ol>
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The Clover Practice™ mirrors the same commitment to truthfulness as Rotary International’s Four-Way Test for speaking and acting.<sup>30</sup> The Four-Way Test shown in Table 1.1 has been translated into more than a hundred languages.

Sometimes it’s hard to figure out whether something is my personal opinion or a truth that must be spoken. The line can be thin. Here are some additional questions to help clarify whether you need to talk about something:

- Will my comment add value?
- Will my comment help me or others get the job done better?
- What are my motives? (See Chapter 2 for more on motives.)

The absolute threshold for speaking out honestly at work is when you believe a negative consequence will befall any of the

stakeholders if you do not speak up—customers, clients, patients, workers, visitors, etc. And remember, you are giving your own “true impressions” and need to be willing to accept that you might be wrong. Table 1.2 suggests a dozen ways to Tell the Truth, Always, at work.

**Table 1.2. A Dozen Ways to Tell the Truth, Always (At Work)**

1. Admit when you haven't finished (or started) a task that is due
2. Admit when you don't know how to do something and ask for help
3. Admit when you do have information, but are not at liberty to share it
4. Refuse to say that someone is “at a meeting” or “gone for the day” when he/she is not
5. Refuse to cover up information affecting the health and well-being of others
6. Refuse to repeat “misinformation” (something you know is not true)
7. State your honest reaction to an idea or proposal, no matter whose it is
8. Give a performance appraisal that is accurate based on what you have heard, seen, and experienced
9. Refuse to distort information about other companies' or organizations' products or services to win business for yourself
10. Admit when you have made a mistake and make any corrections that you can—sooner rather than later
11. Chose the right time and place to tell your truth
12. Describe problems/situations accurately without making them sound better or worse than they are

When setting out to be truthful, consider the time and place that will make it most likely that the other person or persons will be able to really hear what you are saying.

You can live The Clover Practice™ of truth telling even in a society that does not particularly value honesty. You may already follow the path of rigorous honesty. If so, congratulations! You are well on your way to illness-proofing yourself. If you are committed to honesty, other people recognize it. “Living your truth inspires others and gives them permission to live their own true lives in a real, honest, and authentic way, too.”<sup>31</sup>

### **Why Is the Truth So Scary?**

Want to see a group of grown-ups get instantly nervous? Just say, “I am going to tell the truth and I want you to do the same.” This will cause a noticeable response in most groups. People will go white or red in the face and start shuffling and coughing. Guaranteed that no one will say anything right away. In *Driving Fear out of the Workplace*, authors Kathleen Ryan and Dan Oestreich describe the results of interviews of 260 employees at all levels of the organization (manufacturing, service, and government) in various locations across the United States. Seventy percent of those they interviewed said they had hesitated to speak up at least once in the last few years for fear of repercussions. Loss of self-esteem was one of the negative impacts they reported for remaining silent. The authors concluded, “...The problem of fear is a widespread phenomenon, not isolated to a few workplaces.”<sup>32</sup>

People fear getting fired, losing credibility, being perceived as a troublemaker, being passed over for promotions, being frozen out of resources. As a participant in one of my workshops said, “You can be punished in other ways besides getting fired. You can find yourself with no budget and not enough people.” And this is true. But there is a name for that (punishing via withholding resources). It’s called bullying, and you just have to ask yourself if you want to put up with it.

There is more than one dimension of honesty. There is the dimension of honesty about what is going on in our workplaces and there is the level of honesty about what is going on with us individually in our work. Hannegan says that most people build up a false shell so they can feel secure and safe. “We have built these shields to protect ourselves from knowing the truth and have allowed them to become the truth.”<sup>33</sup> We believe our own press. We are terrified of admitting some things to ourselves, much less other people.

I have another thought on why the truth is so scary for most of us. I think that behind all our grown-up self-confidence, we are all still in high school. There is a fear in most of us that we are going to look bad and that someone is going to yell at us. No one wants to be the target of someone else’s anger and disappointment and often our assumption is that we will be just that if we tell the truth.

Psychologists Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey<sup>34</sup> talk about how our own “Big Assumptions” can create misery for us. They say that we unquestioningly believe “...that if we confront some-

one and he becomes terribly angry or terribly upset...well, it will simply be the end of the world. We do not hold our beliefs about conflict...as mere assumptions. We hold them as the truth...They are not so much the assumptions we have as they are the assumptions *that have us.*”<sup>35</sup>

Many of us assume that if the truth is known about how we are doing something, or something we forgot to do, or a mistake we made, terrible things *will certainly* happen. Sometimes, there are serious consequences to being forthright, but more frequently, it’s our own assumptions and fears that “have us” and prevent us from speaking and acting with integrity.

### **The High Price of Fear**

Hannegan points out that there’s a high price to be paid for being controlled by fear. It depletes a person of emotional and physical energy.<sup>36</sup> Research supports the link between openness and immunity to illness too. So it’s worth getting a handle on our own fears that someone is going to yell at us, or people won’t like us if we are honest, or that we will lose our job or position.

If you are in an employment situation that requires you to lie or where the truth is badly distorted on a regular basis or where you can’t speak up about what you see is happening, consider making a job change for the health of your spirit. Hannegan says that to leave a job and take a step into an unknown future can be terrifying. Many people, fearing loss and an unknown future, cling to jobs, relationships, and ways of life “even if it

kills their souls.”<sup>37</sup> Chapter 6 will help you think through your own situation.

### **Assessing the Risks**

Following is a list of questions you can ask yourself if you are concerned about speaking up about an issue:

1. What has my experience been with this person before?
2. What is my motive for bringing this up?
3. What do I hope to get out of it?
4. Do I have enough information to support my observations?
5. What is the best I can hope for if I don’t bring it up?
6. What is the worst thing that could happen if I do bring it up?
7. How realistic is my answer to #6?
8. Can I find a time and place to discuss this so the person can hear it?
9. Do I need to take someone else along?

### **How Am I Doing?**

Table 1.3 includes opportunities to Tell the Truth, Always, in a work setting. After each statement place an X on the line indicating how easy or difficult it is for you. Nobody’s perfect, so try to be accurate without being too hard on yourself. If the question doesn’t fit your work situation, just skip it.

**Table 1.3. How Easy or Hard Is It for Me?**

<p>1. Admit that I haven't finished/started a task that is due soon</p> <p>Easy for me _____ Hard for me</p>
<p>2. Admit when I don't know how to do something and ask for help</p> <p>Easy for me _____ Hard for me</p>
<p>3. Admit that I have information but that I am not at liberty to share it</p> <p>Easy for me _____ Hard for me</p>
<p>4. Refuse to say that someone is "at a meeting" or "gone for the day" when he/she is not</p> <p>Easy for me _____ Hard for me</p>
<p>5. Refuse to cover up information affecting the health and well-being of others</p> <p>Easy for me _____ Hard for me</p>
<p>6. Refuse to repeat "misinformation" (something I know is not true)</p> <p>Easy for me _____ Hard for me</p>

<p>7. State my honest reaction to an idea, proposal, or product, no matter whose it is</p> <p>Easy for me _____ Hard for me</p>
<p>8. Give a performance appraisal that is accurate based on what I have heard, seen, and experienced</p> <p>Easy for me _____ Hard for me</p>
<p>9. Refuse to distort information about other companies' or organizations' products or services to win business/good stuff for myself</p> <p>Easy for me _____ Hard for me</p>
<p>10. Admit when I have made a mistake and make any corrections that I can—sooner rather than later</p> <p>Easy for me _____ Hard for me</p>
<p>11. Choose the right time and place to tell my truth</p> <p>Easy for me _____ Hard for me</p>
<p>12. Describe problems/situations accurately without making them sound better or worse than they are</p> <p>Easy for me _____ Hard for me</p>

Now look over your answers in Table 1.3. Respond to the next set of questions in Table 1.4 to figure out what it means and how you might make some changes.

**Table 1.4. What It All Means**

1. It is easier for me to Tell the Truth, Always, in situations where: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. It is harder for me to Tell the Truth, Always, in situations where:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Look at the “harder for me” situations in question #2 above. What similarities do you see among those situations? Do you see any pattern (e.g., always involves a certain person, happens only with certain kinds of events or tasks, corresponds to how you are feeling physically, etc.)?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Select one situation you listed in question #2 in which you want to be able to Tell the Truth, Always. Write about what makes that situation an “honesty stumbling block” for you. (Fear of looking incompetent, being yelled at, losing compensation, don’t want to hurt others’ feelings, etc.)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

5. How do you think this “honesty stumbling block” affects you (stress, worry, anger, guilt, fewer real relationships, etc.)?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

6. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is “Not Risky” and 10 is “Very Risky,” how would you rate the risk of Telling the Truth, Always, in the situation(s) you described in Question 2? (Circle your answer.)

Not Risky 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Risky

7. How realistic is your fear based on prior experiences with that person or group?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

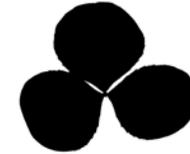
8. What is the worst that could happen to you if you Tell the Truth, Always, in that situation?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

9. Write your goal—specifically what you intend to do, by when, why, and how you will know you are making progress in order to “Tell the Truth, Always.”

## Reflection

If you have more X's on the "hard for me" ends of the lines in Table 1.3, consider this. Kaltman says that if lying seems the only practical response to a situation, there's a motive behind it. You are trying to solve a problem. Try brainstorming alternatives before giving up on telling the truth.<sup>38</sup> When we are stressed out, we can get tunnel vision and find it hard to see alternatives. Consciously slowing ourselves down and listing on paper what all the choices might be in a given situation can help us see alternatives to avoiding the truth.

Even when we wish to live a life of scrupulous honesty, we will still be telling the truth as we know it. We need to stay humble about our reality. "...Many a relationship has been damaged and a work setting poisoned because of *perfectly delivered* constructive feedback!"<sup>39</sup> So it matters *how* you speak your truth. In Chapter 2, Speak for Yourself, the second leaf of The Clover Practice™, provides ways to be truthful so others can hear what we are saying.



## CHAPTER 2: SPEAK FOR YOURSELF

*There's only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self.*

– Aldous Huxley

In Longfellow's classic love triangle, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, John Smith brings a marriage proposal to Puritan maiden Priscilla Mullins from his captain, Miles Standish. Her response was "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" That was good advice.

Speak for Yourself, the second leaf of The Clover Practice™ showed itself as I struggled, as a management consultant, to speak truthfully to my clients. I knew that honesty was the basis for real relationships. "Strong relationships, careers, organizations, and communities all draw from the same source of power—the ability to talk openly about high-stakes, emotional, controversial issues."<sup>40</sup>

It is often said that people don't want to know the truth. I am not convinced of this. We may all be afraid of hearing certain